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Vanuatu authorities suspend Chinese logging company's activities

Round logs a shipping yard of Palekula in Santo. Hilaire Bule

A Chinese company, Vanuatu Forest Industry Ltd, trying to export round logs from Vanuatu has been stopped from doing so by the Department of Forests.

RNZ Pacific Vanuatu correspondent Hilaire Bule reports tonnes of round logs are currently stranded at Palekula on Santo Islands.

Department of Forests director Rexon Vira has revealed the company exported round logs earlier this year for paper production, but that its latest attempt has been stopped because it failed to provide key information on that first export.

Vira said the company had a licence to process timber locally, not to export round logs.

He said the department has suspended the company's activities until it complies with Vanuatu's laws, which prohibit the export of round logs.

Vira could not confirm the value and the quantity of logs currently in Palekula.

It is understood some landowners may have been paid for logs, some of which may have been damaged by Cyclone Harold in 2020.

Bule said residents on Santo say the Chinese company has negatively impacted the environment, claiming that it cut down trees that should not have been felled.

In October this year, the then director general of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fisheries, and Biosecurity, Moses Amos, confirmed that Vanuatu Forest Industry Ltd possessed a valid operating licence and was licensed for logging with interested Santo landowners.

Round logs a shipping yard of Palekula in Santo. Hilaire Bule

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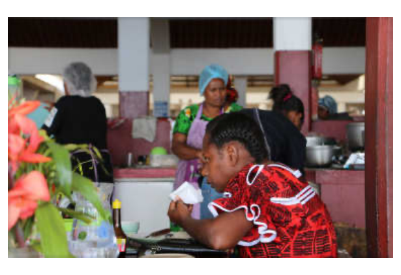

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